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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ARAB MINISTERS LAUNCH REGIONAL GOOD GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (U) Fifteen Arab ministers meeting in Amman, Jordan, along with representatives from the OECD and UNDP, announced September 26 the launch of a regional reform initiative focused on good governance and administrative modernization. The initiative is an outgrowth of commitments to reform made at the most recent Arab League summit in Tunis. Six Arab countries will take the lead in planning and implementing the initiative focusing on areas in which they have been recognized as regional leaders: civil service performance (Morocco), e-government (UAE), oversight of public funds (Egypt), public resource management (Tunisia), civil society and open media (Lebanon), and judicial modernization (Jordan). Jordan also was tasked with preparing for a larger conference on good governance at the prime minister level to be held later in the year at the Dead Sea. In this capacity, Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayez stated publicly that the GOJ would hold talks with donor countries and Arab and international funds to aid reforms in the Middle East.

2. (C) Jordanian Minister of Justice Salah Bashir told Acting DCM that he was quite proud of the initiative and Jordan's leading role in it, joking that the GOJ had once again stolen an Arab leadership opportunity from Egypt. Bashir said that the good governance project was pushing for the same reform goals sought by the U.S. and G-8, but would be better received in the region because it was an Arab-generated initiative. Separately, Manar Dabas, Acting Director of Foreign Minister Muasher's Private Office, told Acting PolCouns that Jordan would work for the inclusion of practical steps and concrete benchmarks in the resulting plan so as to give it some "teeth."

HALE